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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 2006

In Today's Papers

"War of Words" over the PKK

All papers: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticized the United States on Tuesday for tolerating Israel's attacks on its enemies in Lebanon while refusing to allow Ankara to strike PKK terrorists hiding out in northern Iraq. Erdogan is under mounting domestic pressure to get tough with the rebels, who have killed 16 Turkish security personnel in separate attacks over the past week. Papers quote the Prime Minister as saying, "The way they look at terror there (in Israel) and in Turkey is not the same. They show tolerance towards country A and show a different approach to country B. This is unacceptable." Erdogan also repeated hints that Turkey might send troops across the border into Iraq to tackle the rebels if U.S. and Iraqi troops continued to ignore Ankara's demands to act. "Turkey knows how to take care of itself. The relevant security institutions are working on this matter," Erdogan told a meeting of the foreign economic relations council.

Papers also report that US Ambassador Wilson said that Turkey should not act in a unilateral manner in response to a question on a possible cross-border operation. Noting that he has read these news reports, Erdogan stated, "If it is true, it is a wrong statement. Mr. Ambassador or other ambassadors cannot make a decision on such a matter. Concerned institutions of the Turkish government make such decisions. We give our decisions and put them into practice. But if there are any related countries, we also wish to make such a decision together with these countries."

Opposition parties said they extend support to the government for a possible cross-border operation. ANAVATAN, True Path Party [DYP], and Republican People's Party [CHP] noted that Turkey has this right and called on the government to take action. Zaman reports the Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwafaq al-Rubai as warning that a possible Turkish cross-border operation would cause more trouble in the region.

Editorial commentary on the PKK and US-Turkey Relations

Mehmet Y. Yilmaz, writing in mainstream Hurriyet, recommended that readers "think first before getting angry at Israel": "Frankly speaking, it is hard to draw a direct parallel between Israel's action against Hamas and Hezbollah, and Turkey's possible action against the PKK. This conclusion simply comes from our past experience as we know that only air-bombardment will not root out the terrorists. Turkey can achieve a military success only if a strike is coordinated with ground forces, which runs the risk of a hot conflict with the US forces as well as northern Iraqi Kurds. Yet the current situation brings an undeniable question to one's mind: Should we wait for the US and Barzani to come to their senses while we see terrorism causing funerals almost every day? The Turkish government should do something about this problem, but its hands are not strong enough. How is the Turkish government going to explain its cross border operation to the entire world while the same government stands against the Israeli operation as part of a fight against terrorism? By showing a harsh reaction to the Israeli action, even harsher than the Arab world, Turkey narrowed its own options for action."

Emin Pazarci argued in the conservative Bugun: "Patience ran out after seeing 14 deaths caused by terrorism in two days. The government took a harsh stance and it issued a clear message to both the US and Iraq administrations. Turkey's determination was expressed as a warning, 'either you take care of the PKK presence in northern Iraq, or Turkey will take necessary measures alone.' The Turkish public has now started expecting a cross border operation since the government positioned itself at a point of no return for domestic as well as international audiences. First the US will be deciding whether to take necessary steps, and when it does not happen, the second step will be taken -- a cross border operation by the Turkish army. Despite the message issued from the Ankara

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government, the US did not change its stance. Ambassador Ross Wilson made statements which we already know by heart. He claimed that the US shares Turkey's sensitivity and talked about some measures to fight against PKK, while he also suggested that a cross border operation will not settle down the PKK issue. Turkey really has no patience to listen to those words any more. And this rhetoric is disturbing because everybody knows that the PKK's strength has increased since US troops were stationed in this area. Statements from the US that 'we are fighting the terrorists' sound like a joke when Turkey is seeing funerals everyday."

Calling on all parties to think rationally, Hasan Cemal wrote in the mainstream Milliyet: "It is undoubtedly a sign of a double standard when the US supports Israeli action because it serves its interests and at the same time says no to Turkey. It is a right for us to criticize this approach and remind the US that it must take steps against PKK as Turkey's friend and ally. On the other hand, international politics is about double standards. Everybody looks at an issue based on his own perspective and interests. The PKK issue is not one-dimensional. Even though we have the right to self-defense and are capable of conducting a cross-border operation, we should also think first in a rational manner: What tangible results were achieved from Turkey's past cross-border operations? Is this kind of operation really needed since we will definitely receive opposition not only from the US but from the EU, Iraqi Kurds, Iraq and even from some Arab countries? We should not neglect the economic cost of such a military operation either. After taking all these points into account, we should also remember the lesson that we should be taking so far. Fighting against the PKK cannot be about military measures only, and it is not. Fighting PKK terrorism is certainly a just and legitimate cause, but it is very wrong to limit the issue to the military dimension and ignore the democracy, human rights and economic welfare dimensions."

Barzani Wants Friendly Ties with Turkey

Hurriyet quoted Iraqi Kurdistan region's Prime Minister Necirvan Barzani quoted as saying yesterday that "we won't let anybody harm our neighbors from our territory. Turkey is an important neighbor. The PKK issue cannot be resolved only with military measures. Turkey, without any question, can take measures within its territory

to ensure the security of the country. We want to continue our good relations with all our neighbors, including Turkey."

Westerners Flee Lebanon after Israeli Offensive

All papers reported that while Israel continued attacks against Lebanon, Hezbollah retaliated with hundreds of missile attacks on Israel. Westerners and local people continued to evacuate Beirut yesterday amid continued Israeli attacks. Vatan reports that Finland, Sweden and Ukraine have already evacuated their citizens from Beirut. The US forwarded its fleet from the Mediterranean to Lebanon to evacuate 25,000 Americans from Beirut. Yesterday evening a Greek military ship evacuated 400 Greeks from Beirut to Southern Cyprus. Some of the local and foreign families in Southern Lebanon also fled north toward the Syria border. Sabah reported that a Turkish truck was hit yesterday during an Israeli missile attack on Bekaa Valley. Driver Musa Sevim survived the attack and was sent to Turkey through Turkish Embassy in Damascus.

A New Investigation into Author Hrant Dink

Bugun and Cumhuriyet reported that Sisli prosecutor has initiated a new investigation against Hrant Dink in connection with reports that Dink had discussed Armenian Genocide in an interview with Reuters. Dink was tried previously for "insulting Turkishness" and his 6 month prison sentence was postponed.

TV Highlights

NTV (7 a.m.)

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Domestic News

- Turkey sent 35 trucks carrying 630 tons of flour to the Palestinians on Tuesday, a Turkish Foreign Ministry statement said, adding the Turkish Red Crescent would provide 10,000 more tons. Turkey will also send food aid worth USD 1 million through the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees as well as donate USD 1 million by the end of 2006 for the development of small and medium scale industries in the Palestinian territories, according to the statement.
- Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat received DAS Matthew Bryza on Tuesday. Talat's office said after the meeting Bryza raised no new proposal or initiative, adding that the US has reiterated several times its support to all efforts under a UN framework.
- Prime Minister Erdogan received on Tuesday Lebanese lawmaker Saad Hariri, the son of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in Istanbul. No statement was made after the meeting which lasted for nearly two and a half hours.
- Turkish jandarma seized 46 kilogram of A-4 explosives and 70 hand grenades in the southeastern province of Sirnak.

International News

- Israeli jetfighters bombed Lebanon on Tuesday, killing at least 50 people. Prime Minister Olmert vowed Israel will continue to "target every terrorist" in its military campaign. Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora said Israel has inflicted billions of dollars of damage to the country's infrastructure and is trying to set the country back 50 years.
- The President of the regional Kurdish administration, Massoud Barzani, said the Kurds had the right to establish their own state, and that these aspirations would be made a reality "at the appropriate time."
- A report by UN Assistance Mission for Iraq said 5,818 civilians were killed and 5,762 wounded during May and June 2006 in the war-ravaged country.
- A policy editorial in The Los Angeles Times sharply criticizes the Bush Administration for pulling back the US Ambassador in Yerevan, John Evans, for backing Armenian genocide claims.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>
WILSON